FICTION

Latifa Babas, "Moroccan diplomats # 21: In the 17th century, the Republic of Sale came to London," *Yabiladi*; posted 05/10/2018. URL: https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/69595/diplomates-marocains-xviie-siecle-republique.html

In the 17th century, Morocco and England took care to maintain their diplomatic relations, even in politically and economically difficult times in one kingdom or another. In this context, t**he Saadian sultan Zidan Abou Maali lost control of Salé**, a strong city in its port which became a hub of privateer activities in the Mediterranean region. ***He never had control; his father al-Mansur granted it autonomy in 1595.***

Thus, the city was proclaimed a republic in 1624. In the process, London did not hesitate to rally this new rising force on its side, hoping to defeat Spain, one of its formidable enemies.

Exchanges of visits

According to historical records, the Republic of Salé (1627 - 1668) was empowered to send ambassadors abroad, to represent it during treaty negotiations, on the same basis as the Saadians (1554 - 1636). As part of the missions and visits exchanged between countries, it was up to British diplomat John Harrisson to visit Morocco in May 1627.

The objective was to "*conclude an agreement relating to the release of British captives, but also to consolidate alliances with the various factions of the country*", according to the work of David Thomas and John A. Chestworth, " Christian-Muslim Relations . A Bibliographical History. Northern and Eastern Europe 1600-1700"(Christian and Muslim Relations, a Bibliographic History - Northern and Southern Europe, 1600-1700, ed. Brill, 2016).

During this visit, which was not the first in the framework of these negotiations, the British representative came with "*six guns and ammunition*", as a help to the Republic of Bouregreg in its fight against the Spanish corsairs. **"*Six pieces of heavy artillery had been supplied to the Moroccan rebels of Sidi M'hamed el Ayachi by Harrison, without the opposition of the Moroccan sovereign*"**, according to the same source.

In its search for proximity with the corsairs of Salé, London aimed above all at an enemy common to both parties: the Iberian kingdom. Nicknamed 'the saint of Salé', the military leader El Ayachi (1563 - 1641) indeed attacked Spanish ships and the port of his city was a "strategic" point, especially during his battle against the Spaniards in the spring of 1627.

Ambassadors of the Republic of Salé on mission in London

The success of these military campaigns thus gave rise to an agreement with London. "*Harrison negotiated a treaty with al Ayachi, and the summer of that year, shortly before the death of Zidan Abu Maali, accompanied the ambassadors of Sale*" dispatched to England.

To this end, **Mohammed ben Saad and Ahmad ben Hussein were sent as Salé's ambassadors to London "*to discuss the use of the city's maritime platform as a basis for joint action against Spain*"**, recalled the two historians in their work.

This diplomatic mission was also mentioned by the Lebanese historian Nabil Matar, in his book " Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery" (The Turks, the Moors and the English in the Age of Discovery, Columbia ed. University Press, October 25, 2000). The latter reports that **“*in June 1627, two ambassadors from Salé arrived in London. They were Mohammed ben Saad and Ahmed ben Hussein, accompanied by Harrison* ”. According to Matar, the mission hinged on military cooperation between the two entities in order to defeat the Iberian army.**

The two parties continued to maintain good diplomatic relations and a book by writer Peter Lamborn Wilson reviews this continuity. His work " Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegadoes " (The pirates' utopias: Moorish corsairs and European renegades, Autonomedia ed., 2003) even indicates that in 1637, another ambassador representing the Republic of Salé was sent to London.

For his part, a British journalist even devoted an article to this reconciliation, while describing the accoutrements, the attitudes of the corsair representation and certain aspects of the Muslim religion which aroused his interest.